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ABSTRACT

Expectation theory, developed during the 1930s and 1940s, explains human behavior in terms of interaction between person and situation characteristics, as they are perceived by the individual. This study is centered on the expectations of Belgian and Brazilian undergraduates about their first professional job. Recent research about work expectations by men and women found as its main determinants, social class, number of socially acceptable careers and the type of social experiences available during childhood. Brazilian (N=342) and Belgian (N=273) undergraduate college students completed an inventory which assessed work-related expectations in the areas of work's social significance, tasks characteristics, opportunity to use one's abilities, and opportunity to receive feedback about one's performance. The results indicated that the expectations of young people about their future were influenced by their cultural background and their previous work experience. Brazilians were optimistic about their first jobs, despite the economic situation in the country. Not only did they expect to be more successful in their jobs, but the women expected their jobs would be socially significant. Belgians showed pessimism towards their first jobs and feared that requirements would be high. (ABL)

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Work Expectations
In Brazilian and Belgian Undergraduates

Maria Alice D'Amorim

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ABSTRACT

Work expectations are relevant to performance and are related to turnover. These expectations were measured with Brazilian and Belgian undergraduates along five dimensions: Positive and negative aspects of their future task, feedback received, relevance of one's work, and its general demands. Brazilian are more optimistic in their expectations about the task and work's relevance. Belgians expect more feedback and work's demands. Women tend to have higher expectations than men, in all five dimensions. Level of work's experience was irrelevant to subjects' expectations. Knowledge of these expectations can help plan a realistic job preview.

Tokyo

WORK EXPECTATIONS IN BRAZILIAN AND BELGIAN UNDERGRADUATES

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Expectation theory, developed during the thirties and fourties, explains human behavior in terms of interaction between personal and situation characteristics, as they are perceived by the individual. This theory considers human beings as rational, making councious choices between possible behavior alternatives, that would bring about immediate or distant consequences. The perception of the existing interval between the behavioral decision and the final goal has been called time perspective. (Nuttin, 1980; De Volder and Lens, 1982). Time perspective presents a double interest to expectation theory: its motivational aspect, related to the positive or negative valence of goals, no matter how distant, and its cognitive disposition to evaluate long term consequences for every alternative.

The first systematic and comprehensive formulation of expectation theory in terms of work situation, was that of Vroom, (1964), followed, among others, by those of Porter and Lawler, (1968), and Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler and Weick, (1970). Expectation can be defined as a belief about the probability of a chosen act,produce a specific consequence. Although presenting variations in its form, expectancy theory has, as its core, the belief that individuals will choose the alternative whose consequences are seen as more advantageous, having a higher positive valence. (Wexley and Yukl, 1977).

Expectations, in the work situation, has been considered

in two temporal moments; in the present, it explains the perceived relation between effort and performance and, in the future, the acknowledge distance between actual performance and desired goal. These two faces of expectations and the construct of positive or negative goal valence, are the three basic elements of work motivation. (Steers, 1981).

One of the most important factors that contribute to job satisfaction and the reduction of turnover, is the level of agreement between the worker expectations and the organizational environement at the moment of his entrance. Recetly these expectations have been studied as the number of resignations from people with university degrees, during their first year in a job, has shown the need for a more careful orientation of new employees.

The result of trying to improve admission procedures is called realistic job preview. (Dean and Wanous, 1984; Mcevoy and Cascio,1985; Premark and Wanous, 1985; Meglino, De Nisi, Youngblood and Williams, 1988). The concept of realistic job preview can be applied even with volunteer's activities. A residence for mentally retarded suffered from a high level of turnover among their helpers; a realistic job description of the sort of tasks required from helpers led to a stable situation. (Zaharia and Baumeister, 1981).

The expectations of a newcomer facing his job can be conscious or unconscious, and may focus on personal relations, on the type of tasks to be assumed or on the structure and dynamics of the organization. Louis, 1980) emphasizes the element of surprise, present in all new situations, that represents the difference between individual expectations and work experience. This surprise that can be positive or negative,may apply to the task itself, to work conditions, to interpersonal relations or to the individual's

feeling of self-realization.

This study is centered on the expectations of Belgian and Brazilian undergraduates, about their first professional job. Recent research about work expectations by men and women found as its main determinants, social class, number of socially acceptable careers and the type of social experiences available during childhood. University students in general, present favorable socioeconomic conditions and a wide choice of careers; we are interested, in the perceptions such subjects have of their first "real" job, an activity that has been prepared during long years of study, and how different cultural environements will affect their expectations.

METHOD

SUBJECTS

Brazilian, (342) and Belgian (273), undergraduates with a proportion of 55% of men and 45% of women, were used as subjects. Belgians had a mean age of 19,2 years and a standard deviation of 2,45, with 27,8% of them having some work experience, Brazilians had a mean age of 21.4 years, a standard deviation of 2.61 and only 19% of them had some kind of work experience.

INSTRUMENT

The work-related expectation inventory was developed by Haccoun, Lemay and Girard (1984) with original forms in english and french. This last form was translated by the author with the help of another researcher and returned to french by two professors whose native language is french.*

The instrument measures several aspects of work expectations; work's social significance, tasks characteristics, opportunity to use one's abilities, and receive feedback about one's performance, among others. It has two parts, one about general work expectations (Questions,QI to Q7),and the second with statements about specific task characteristics,(itens I1 to I19).

Subjects evaluated, in a seven point scale, the likewood of each statement; itens in negative form had their scores inverted (I3, I5, I7, I9, I12, I14, I16, I19). (Annex 1.)

A correlation matrix for the seven questions (Q1 to Q7), and 19 itens (I1 to I19),was factor analysed via principal factor with interacted communalities, followed by a varimax rotation for factors with eigenvalues greater than one. Four factors emerged: 1. Negative expectations about the job (ten itens); 2. Positive expectation about the job (three questions and six itens); 3. Job general requirements (three questions and two itens); 4. expectations about the social significance of the job (one question and one item).

[T A B L E 1]

PROCEDURE

Brazilian subjects answered the inventory during 1986 and Belgian two years latter, in the original french version. In both cases, the instrument was presented to the students during class periods by the author, as a voluntary participation in research.

RESULTS

Four Anovas were computed, one for each factor, including

sex of subject, country of origin and work experience. Significant national differences were obtained for all factors; sex differences were present for three of the four factors: positive and negative expectations about the job and its social significance. No differences were found, at this point for level of work experience, so this variable does not appear in table 2.

[T A B L E 2]

To clarify the origins of these differences, Student's t tests were computed, comparing Brazilians and Belgians, within the four subgroups, for all factors.

[T A B L E 3]

This comparison showed significant national differences for students without work experience, Belgian have higher negative expectations about future jobs that are also viewed as more demanding in its requirements. Brazilians have a higher positive expectation specially about the social significance of their future jobs. The subjects with some work experience differ only in their expectations about job requirements, that are perceived by Belgian as more exacting.

Men differ in their positive expectations about their future jobs, that are higer for Brasilians. The level of exigence they will have to satisfy is considered higher by the Belgians, either men or women. The Belgian women have also higher negative expectations about their job. Brazilian women expect, more than Belgian, to have in the future, socially significant jobs.

For each national group, sex and work experience differences

were computed; no work differences were obtained.For Brazil,women had higher expectations about the social significance of their jobs than men,($t = -3,02$; $p = .003$). Belgian women had higher positive as well as negative expectations about their jobs.
($t = -3,82$, $p = .001$ and $t = -3,39$; $p = .001$, respectively).

D I S C U S S I O N

The dimensions measured by the instrument show that the expectatives of young people about their future,are influenced by their cultural backgroud and their previous work experience. Brazilians are optimistic about their first jobs,despite the economic situation of the country. Not only they expect to be more successful in their jobs but also,for the women,they will be socialy significant. This optimism,can be considered a cultural trait,that has sustained Brazilians, through successive political and economic crises - things will get better, since they cannot get worse. Despite renewed instances where the national situation did not improve,their future time perspective is always positive.

Belgians,show pessimism towards their first jobs and fear that requirements will be high; this in a country with a stable economy and an excelent position in the new Europe 92.

TABLE 1

WORK EXPECTATIONS
FACTORS, LOADS AND MEANS

FACTORS	ITENS	LOADS	MEANS	SHORT DESCRIPTIONS OF ITENS: My job....(I1) to I19)
1	I3	.51	5.08	Would never be an entire piece of work.
Negative	I5	.63	5.52	Would be quite simple and repetitive.
Expectations	I6	-.56	2.82	Could be done without checking with others.
About	I7	.50	4.97	Would seldon receive feed-back from my boss.
Job	I9	.60	5.41	Would not require initiative or judgement.
	I12	.49	4.99	Would give few clues about my performance.
	I14	.46	5.23	Would have no social significance.
	I16	.52	4.84	Would receive no feedback from co-workers.
	I17	-.59	2.67	Could be done without communication with others.
	I19	.57	5.54	Would not require personal judgements.
2	Q3	.48	4.78	Would my job form a well limited "whole"?
Positive	Q6	.58	4.55	Would I receive feedback about my work?
Expectations	Q7	.32	5.32	Would my job allow me to judge my performance?
About	I4	.44	5.55	Would help me know,how well I an doing.
Job	I10	.71	4.98	Would receive feedback from supervisor.
	I11	.61	5.29	Would allow me to finish a piece of work.
	I13	.61	5.01	Would allow me freedom to organize my work.
	I15	.47	4.62	Would permit me to arrange my timetable.
	I18	.54	4.50	Would permit me to present a "final" product.
3	Q1	.54	5.47	Would my job demand close contact with others?
Job	Q2	.45	4.90	Could I freely organize my work?
General	Q4	.38	5.10	Would I have to use a variety of skills?
Requirements	I1	.35	5.16	Would require the use of high-level skills.
	I2	.40	5.62	Would require cooperation with others.
4	Q5	.73	5.16	Would my work affect other people's lives?
Social	I8	.58	5.41	Would affect other people.
Significance of Job				

T A B L E 2

WORK EXPECTATIONS: NATIONAL AND SEX DIFFERENCES
MEANS, VALUES OF F AND p

FACTOR	COUNTRY				SEX			
	BRAZIL	BELGIUM	F(1,590)	p	MALE	FEMALE	F(1,590)	p
Negative Expectations	4.66	4.89	13.33	.000	4.65	4.84	8.87	.003
Positive Expectations	5.22	4.89	22.84	.000	4.99	5.14	4.89	.027
General Requirements	5.14	5.56	35.45	.000	5.28	5.35	.74	.390
Significance	5.48	5.18	7.10	.008	5.19	5.48	7.43	.007

T A B L E 3

WORK EXPECTATIONS; BRAZILIANS X BELGIANS
MEANS, VALUES OF t AND p

FACTOR	GROUPS	BRAZIL	BELGIUM	t	p
Negative Expectations	Men	4.59	4.79	1.59	.117
	Women	4.69	5.02	4.30	.000
	Work	4.70	4.91	1.89	.061
	No work	4.64	4.88	3.42	.001
Positive Expectations	Men	5.21	4.67	-4.96	.000
	Women	5.22	5.03	-1.96	.051
	Work	5.24	4.97	-1.93	.056
	No work	5.21	4.82	-4.43	.000
General Requirements	Men	5.10	5.48	3.59	.000
	Women	5.16	5.57	4.73	.000
	Work	5.11	5.55	3.10	.002
	No work	5.14	5.56	5.44	.000
Significance	Men	5.24	5.09	- .91	.363
	Women	5.67	5.22	-3.15	.002
	Work	5.33	5.13	- .87	.403
	No work	5.51	5.20	-2.48	.014

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